



United States Mission to the OSCE

Session 2: Combating Intolerance and Discrimination I

As prepared for delivery by Ambassador Richard Williamson
to the OSCE Human Dimension Implementation Meeting
Warsaw, September 25, 2007

Moderator,

The United States welcomes the opportunity to review our shared commitments to combat anti-Semitism; intolerance and discrimination against Muslims; racism; xenophobia; and discrimination against Christians and members of other religions and to discuss ways to better ensure implementation of these existing commitments.

Five years ago, in response to particularly troubling trends, the OSCE took on the vital task of working intensively with participating States to address the rise of anti-Semitism and violent extremism throughout the OSCE region. ODIHR's tolerance unit is now able to assist States in designing legislative, educational, law enforcement, and data collection tools to address discrimination and hate crimes. In particular, the United States notes the success of programs on education for Holocaust Remembrance, development of anti-Semitism and anti-discrimination teaching guidelines and materials, and efforts to strengthen hate crimes data collection.

ODIHR's education and diversity initiatives, working with the OSCE/ODHIR Panel of Experts on Freedom of Religion or Belief to include Muslim, Christian, and other religious communities, should continue. However, we believe ODIHR activity on a crosscutting issue like religious freedom should not be solely limited to the Tolerance and Non-Discrimination Program, but should also be included in Human Rights Department activities.

OSCE participating States have consciously and correctly limited the scope of OSCE interest in the area of tolerance and non-discrimination to those that could threaten the security of the region. Expansion of OSCE commitment beyond these priority areas would dilute OSCE tolerance programs and projects and would duplicate activities of other organizations. The tolerance unit should remain focused on commitments where we have achieved a consensus—combating anti-Semitism, intolerance and discrimination against Christians, Muslims and members of other religions, and racism, xenophobia and related intolerance.

Participating States must continue and increase their work with ODIHR if the OSCE is to be successful in eradicating hate crimes. In compiling statistics for its 2006 hate crimes report, sixteen participating States failed to submit statistical information on their hate crimes to ODIHR and ten participating States sent no information on their tolerance legislation. Numerous States have not implemented or enforced tolerance legislation, treating hate crimes either as simple acts of hooliganism rather than serious offences or not prosecuting them at all, even where legislation

provided for prosecution of the offenses as hate crimes. Additionally, a number of participating States did not submit information about practical initiatives and some countries have yet to appoint a national point of contact for hate crimes. Countries are urged to send their overdue submissions without further delay and to periodically forward statistical information to ODIHR for compilation.

The United States believes additional follow-up is needed next year to the series of conferences on anti-Semitism and other forms of intolerance, most recently held in Bucharest in June of this year. We would welcome a Ministerial decision to convene a high-level conference on anti-Semitism, discrimination against Muslims, and discrimination against Christians and members of other religions in 2009, with an experts meeting in 2008, along with the continuance of the implementation review taking place within annual HDIM conferences.

We thank the Spanish Chairmanship for its support for the three Personal Representatives and hope the incoming Finnish Chair-in-Office will reappoint and support their work with their current and distinct mandates. We appreciate the expertise that Professor Gert Weisskirchen, Ambassador Ömür Orhun, and Ms. Anastasia Crickley bring to their respective positions. The United States was pleased that they played an active role at the Bucharest conference and the special NGO day, and we encourage additional direct engagement by the Personal Representatives with participating States. We invite suggestions for improving their ability to perform their mandates.

The OSCE Parliamentary Assembly has also supported the work of the Personal Representatives, including an invitation to present their work at its upcoming gatherings. We encourage this initiative as a means of increasing parliamentarians' efforts to combat intolerance and encourage future collaborations between the Personal Representatives, OSCE PA, and OSCE in this area.

Unfortunately, the continued desecration of Jewish graves and worship sites, deaths of racial minorities at the hands of extremists, continued social exclusion of Muslims through laws and regulations, discriminatory religious registration laws that impact all faiths, and statements by political leaders in the OSCE region who foment prejudice and bigotry, demonstrate that our work is not yet done. Learning from our successes these past five years we can, however, prevail.